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# INSPIRATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

A long-term partnership between South Australia's Nazareth Catholic Community and the Rotary Club of West Torrens, along with the Good Crocodile Foundation in Timor-Leste, has invested close to \$150,000 over nearly seven years to support the Timorese community of Triloka and undertake life-changing projects in the region. The latest project is providing much needed medical assistance to the community and its outlying villages through the donation of a second mobile medical clinic.

**THE** partnership was forged in 2012, when director of Nazareth Catholic Community Michael Dahl visited the Good Crocodile Foundation, Fundação Lafaek Diak (FLD), in Bacau, Timor-Leste. Founded in 2005 by a group of Timorese and international friends, FLD serves the poorest of the poor in rural areas.

On his return, Michael formalised the project, Nazareth Outreach Work (NOW), and started raising funds through both the Nazareth Catholic Community and local community. He approached the Rotary Club of West Torrens for assistance. The club recognised the opportunity as "... a good fit" and another valuable

The recent Presidents' Elect Training Seminar (PETS) in South Australia highlighted another beneficial partnership – it was the first combined districts PETS, giving members from Districts 9500 and 9520 the opportunity to work together. The spotlight is on the two districts as they prepare to form District 9510 on July 1, 2020. The seminar was held over two days at Nazareth Catholic College, an outcome of its partnership with Rotary.



Director of Nazareth Catholic Community Michael Dahl, left, with president of the Rotary Club of West Torrens Maurie Howard and fellow club members John Duncan, Bruce Harrison, Jeff Lanyon, Roger and Maxine Webb with the new Land Cruiser the club donated.

partnership was formed, with Michael becoming a member of the club. The partnership is still going strong in its seventh year, with the club providing financial assistance, publicity, mentoring and encouragement.

In November 2012, armed with a Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) project number, the first group of young adults and staff from Nazareth Catholic Community travelled to Timor-Leste to work with FLD in the village of Triloka, situated 130km from Dili. They took a container of goods, including school furniture and equipment, paint and painting equipment, clothing and uniforms. They painted and repaired community buildings, taught sport and dance in local schools and assisted with the health program. They also presented the Triloka community with a cheque for \$20,000 to assist in the construction of a birthing house and mother and child clinic, which was completed in late 2013.

To date, West Torrens club members Michael, David Jones and Max McSorley, along with over 70 Nazareth Catholic Community members, including college graduates and staff, have visited more than a dozen schools in Triloka and surrounds.



Nazareth Catholic Community participants Brigitta Ragg, Lucy Tauber and Maddi Papantoniou with students at Ossoluga Primary School in Triloka.

In 2014, Nazareth Catholic Community and the Rotary Club of West Torrens fundraised for a 4WD vehicle, which was set up as a mobile health clinic and presented to FLD and the Triloka community in August. Thanks to an anonymous donor, the Rotary club recently provided a second 4WD vehicle, a Land Cruiser, to the community, which has also been fitted out with medical equipment and supplies to boost necessary medical support for outlying villages.

“Nazareth Catholic Community is delighted the club has been able to source the vehicle,” Michael said. “It was unexpected and will certainly be put to good use immediately.”

The seventh group of Nazareth Catholic Community members saw the new mobile medical unit at work when they travelled to Triloka in July. During their visit, the group constructed and installed a second community playground, funded by the Rotary Club of West Torrens with the assistance of a district grant. As much of the equipment as possible



Students from Aubaca Primary School in Triloka play on the newly opened playground.

was purchased from local suppliers in Triloka.

“Each year, Nazareth Catholic Community works with FLD to determine where the greatest needs in their community lie and then raise funds and source donations to support these projects,” Nazareth Catholic Community marketing and communications officer, and four times volunteer, Maddi Papantoniou said. “These projects are made possible through the partnership with Rotary.”

It is clear this three-way partnership

is “building goodwill and better friendships and is beneficial to all concerned”. Volunteers find it a life-changing experience and a challenge to their own privileged world.

“Our Rotary club is small in number, but we make a big difference through this inspirational partnership,” club president Maurie Howard said.

The club hopes the partnership will also inspire some of the young people from Nazareth Catholic College to move into Rotaract and/or Rotary in the future.

# WHEELCHAIRS FOR KIDS REACHES 40,000 MILESTONE

The Rotary Club of Scarborough, WA, has distributed over 40,000 wheelchairs to underprivileged children in 60 countries throughout the world.

**WHEELCHAIRS** for Kids commenced in 1998, with the assistance of the Rotary Club of Surfers Sunrise, Qld, and Christian Brothers. The project produces 350 wheelchairs per month, which are built to World Health Organisation recommendations. They are adjustable for children of all sizes – and their growing needs – and are equipped for use in rough terrain. This is vital, as many are gifted to those in remote areas with limited infrastructure.

The wheelchairs are normally fitted with postural support devices, headrest, knee separator, body and foot harnesses, a tray, therapeutic waterproof cushion, basket, knee rug, soft toy and tool kit.

Distribution is arranged and financed by organisations such as World Vision. Subsequently, groups such as Motivation, who train local health workers, or qualified physiotherapists volunteering their time, ensure the wheelchairs are fitted correctly to each child.





Wheelchairs in most cases transform the lives of their recipients. Many children are lifted off the ground and given mobility for the first time in their lives. The 40,000th wheelchair went to a child in Nepal, fitted by Australian volunteer occupational physiotherapist Nina Murray, based in Kathmandu and working with NGO the Karuna Foundation.

A donation of \$200 gives a child a wheelchair. This is achieved through a volunteer workforce of 230 retirees in a modern factory in Wangara, WA, which holds four computerised CNC machines. The factory is arranged so anyone is capable of operating the various functions with minimal training.

However, for other skilled work, the project is fortunate to have within the volunteer group retired toolmakers, electricians, metal workers, accountants and surgeons. Volunteer "back room" activities include financial administration, procurement, warehousing, despatch, marketing, website maintenance, promotional talks and CAD drawing work for maintaining the wheelchair design.

Working part-time in morning shifts, teams of volunteers currently produce 25 wheelchairs per day – with the capacity to produce many more when additional funding for materials is available. Additionally, working from home bases, there is a large cohort

of hundreds of volunteers carrying out important tasks such as cutting and sewing covers for the wheelchair seat back and restraint cushions; crocheting, knitting and sewing individual knee rugs; and the knitting and sewing of soft toys.

Ongoing production and distribution of pre-positioned spare parts is also necessary, to allow repairs to be made as required. Many parts are not locally available, meaning something as simple as a single broken castor wheel could result in a wheelchair being otherwise discarded.

The factory rent is funded predominantly by the WA State Government. The Rotary Club of Scarborough, assisted by the Christian Brothers, cover other expenses. All funds raised go towards producing wheelchairs; all work, administration and fundraising on the project is on an entirely volunteer basis.

While the bulk of the group's income comes from individuals, small businesses, trusts and bequests, 300 schools and 200 Rotary clubs have made significant contributions over the years – with some Rotary clubs also financing and assisting with distribution to those in need.

**For more information, visit [www.wheelchairsforkids.org](http://www.wheelchairsforkids.org) or email volunteer CEO Gordon Hudson [gghudson@wheelchairsforkids.org](mailto:gghudson@wheelchairsforkids.org).**



## STEP UP AND ENGAGE WITH ROTARY

**WITHOUT** The Rotary Foundation's Endowment Fund, our efforts would be for naught. The endowment is the backbone of Rotary's efforts around the world, providing access to the time, talent and resources needed to make a difference. Our goal of building the Endowment Fund to \$2.025 billion by 2025, and this year's fundraising goal of \$380 million, are surely some of the most important tasks at hand for our organisation.

Your financial support has made possible every single thing that Rotary has done over the years. But, what's equally essential – and might sometimes be in danger of being overlooked – is your participation.

Without you, Rotary is nothing.

The Foundation needs your presence, your input and your creative mind just as much as it needs your generous financial backing. Your Rotary club needs you to be there at meetings – not to warm a chair, but to engage, to inspire.

Last month, I shared how my relationship with Rotary changed when I went from being a tepid (at best) seat-warmer to a committee chair who was engaged and focused. You don't need to wait for someone to ask you to chair a committee or be a club officer to begin to transform your Rotary journey. There's a place in Rotary for all of you to step up and become *People of Action*.

Be engaged. Working with your club on service projects that qualify for District Designated Funds is one



**Ron Burton**  
The Rotary  
Foundation Trustee  
Chair

way to participate and use your voice to make a real difference. If your club has no service projects that interest you, work on getting some new ones underway. Carry out community assessments to find out how we can best use our resources to create positive change.

This month, I invite you to transform the way you think about your involvement with Rotary. Consider every meeting a chance to discover new channels for your energy and to brainstorm with like-minded Rotarians about how you can work together for a better world.

**Ron Burton**  
Foundation Trustee Chair

## POLIO REPORTS NOT ALWAYS WHAT THEY SEEM

*Michelle Tanner*  
District 9930 polio chair

**I HEAR** there's a case of polio in... A statement to cause the heart of any Rotarian to sink. However, media reports are often not all that they

seem. So, why do they appear? The answer is, they usually originate from some aspect of polio surveillance reporting.

Surveillance is a major part of the strategy to eradicate polio and involves looking very hard for the virus and potential cases of the disease. This surveillance, conducted through the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), is two phased. First, scientists examine samples of water and sewerage looking for wild and vaccine-derived poliovirus. Finding vaccine-derived virus is usually good (it means local children have recently received oral polio vaccine); finding wild virus is not (it means someone locally is infected with polio).

The second aspect of surveillance looks for cases of disease. In developing countries, health providers are required to report every case of what is referred to as "acute flaccid paralysis" or AFP. AFP is caused by polio and many other conditions. Every report of AFP is thoroughly investigated, and in almost every case the cause is not polio.

This is what happened in Venezuela recently. A child presented with AFP and their stool specimen showed the presence of Sabin type 3 poliovirus. This is actually a vaccine-derived virus, and indicated that the child, or members of their community, had recently been vaccinated. This is probably what reporters picked up on without understanding the difference.

Polio surveillance is very expensive and will need to continue for several years after we see our last case of polio. It was therefore thrilling to see so many Rotary districts in Australasia recognised in Toronto, Canada, in June for their strong support for PolioPlus. This was partly thanks to a NZ\$5 million contribution from the New Zealand Government, which was split equally between the six Rotary districts and will be matched 2:1 by The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

So, the next time you hear of "a case of polio in..." don't jump to conclusions. It may not be what it seems.

